

Assessment of glyphosate levels in beer

Updated BfR Communication No. 024/2017 of 25 August 2017¹

In a recent study conducted by the Munich Environmental Institute (Umweltinstitut München e.V.), the 14 highest-selling German beers were tested for glyphosate. The same beer varieties had already been tested in 2016, and there is a clear downtrend in glyphosate levels. The limit of quantification of 0.2 micrograms per litre appears plausible, even though not all the details of the employed analytical method are known. Traces of glyphosate were found in all the beers. The levels were between 0.3 and 5.1 micrograms per litre and therefore significantly lower (by a factor of 6 for the highest detected value) than in 2016, when up to 30 micrograms per litre were detected. From a scientific point of view, glyphosate residues in beer are plausible and generally to be expected, as glyphosate is an approved active substance for uses in cereals, although the residues in beer must not exceed the maximum residue levels that are stipulated for cereals taking into account a processing factor for beer. With regard to the authorised late applications of glyphosate in cereals that result in residues, however, it is generally the case in Germany that cereals used in brewing are excluded from such application.

Even the highest glyphosate content in beer reported in 2016 (30 micrograms per litre) is so low that the intake for an adult (60 kg bodyweight) calculated on this basis would be more than 1000 times lower than the currently estimated amount that can be ingested daily over a lifetime without appreciable health risk (ADI – acceptable daily intake) or than the acute reference dose (ARfD – the amount of substance per kg bodyweight that can be ingested with food at one meal or within the course of one day without a discernible health risk to consumers). In order to ingest quantities of glyphosate that would pose a health risk, an adult would have to drink roughly 1000 litres of beer in one day. According to the current state of knowledge, glyphosate levels of 30 micrograms per litre beer and clearly below as currently reported do not pose a health risk.

Further information available on the BfR website under the heading “Glyphosate”:

Published BfR documents on glyphosate

http://www.bfr.bund.de/en/a-z_index/glyphosate-193962.html

This text version is a translation of the original German text which is the only legally binding version

¹ This Updated Communication replaces Communication No. 005/2016